

**FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
May 25, 2022**

A meeting of the Town Council was held on Wednesday, May 25, 2022, at the Municipal Building, 2nd Floor, Council Chambers, 355 East Central Street, Franklin, MA. Councilors present: Brian Chandler, Theodore Cormier-Leger, Robert Dellorco, Cobi Frongillo, Melanie Hamblen, Glenn Jones, Thomas Mercer, Deborah Pellegrini, Patrick Sheridan. Councilors absent: None. Administrative personnel in attendance: Jamie Hellen, Town Administrator; Mark Cerel, Town Attorney; Alecia Alleyne, Assistant to the Town Administrator.

CALL TO ORDER: ► Chair Mercer called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Chair Mercer called for a moment of silence in memory of the 18 children and 2 adults who were murdered yesterday at the elementary school in Uvalde, Texas. All recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: ► Chair Mercer reviewed the following as posted on the agenda. A Note to Residents: All citizens are welcome to attend public board and committee meetings in person. Meetings are live-streamed by Franklin TV and shown on Comcast Channel 11 and Verizon Channel 29. In an effort to maximize citizen engagement opportunities, citizens will be able to continue to participate remotely via phone or Zoom. He announced that this meeting is being recorded by Franklin TV and shown on Comcast channel 11 and Verizon Channel 29. This meeting may be recorded by others.

CITIZEN COMMENTS: ► Ms. Marissa Bovie, 69 Milliken Avenue, stated that she believes one of the most pressing matters for the immediate future is climate change. She reviewed recent temperatures and changes. She stated that it is crucial to act now while we still have the chance to mitigate these devastating predictions. She stated that we must reach net zero by 2050. She stated that lowering emissions is needed. She reviewed the climate roadmap bill passed in Massachusetts in 2021. She stated that every town in Massachusetts must take action to help achieve these benchmarks. She recommended that the Town Council seriously consider adopting a new energy code once the new special Stretch Energy Code is released by the state.

HEARINGS: 7:00pm. ► *FY23 Town Council Annual Operating Budget Hearing.* ► Chair Mercer opened the public hearing. He thanked and congratulated the municipal and school staff for an incredible job done over the past year. ► Mr. Hellen thanked all town staff, school staff, and the Finance Committee for their work. He stated that there is sure to be debate over the many policy decisions facing the community. He suggested that all should feel grateful for what the Town does have and not just focus on what the Town does not have. He reviewed some of the accomplishments by Town departments. He noted that the Town was awarded a AAA bond rating. He thanked the Finance Committee for their three nights of public meetings on the budget. He thanked Superintendent of Schools Sarah Ahern for her work as she is leaving for another town. He stated that they look forward to working with new the superintendent Mr. Lucas Giguere. ► Chair Mercer reviewed the budget hearing process for tonight's meeting. He stated that the documents are available on the Town's website and on social media. He stated that he was putting a Town Council hold on the following five departments: ► Hold on Public Buildings and Properties-Facilities, Fire, Police, Schools, and DPW. ► Councilor Jones read each *Town of Franklin Operating Budget FY 2023 Voting Document* line item.

► Hold on Line Item 131: Finance Committee. ► Councilor Chandler stated that the Finance Committee did a great job and people can watch the Finance Committee videos online as they answer many questions.

► Hold on Line Item 161: Town Clerk. ■ Councilor Jones noted that the Town Clerk's position is an elected position and does not fall under the Town Administrator. He suggested the Town Council review the current amount the Town Clerk is making. He asked what is the average compensation for other town clerks. ■ Mr. Hellen stated that a third-party consultant was hired for a compensation and classification study. He stated that they are in the middle of that; the document is expected in later summer. He stated that there is a methodology the consultant is using to determine the comparable rates to make sure we are adequately paying our staff based on the market. ■ Councilor Dellorco asked if the Town Clerk as an elected official gets a cost-of-living raise. ■ Mr. Hellen stated yes. He stated that the 2.5 percent COLA adjustment is on tomorrow night's meeting legislation. He stated that it is required under state law that the Town Council votes on the Town Clerk as an elected official's salary. ■ Councilor Pellegri stated that she does not believe the 2.5 percent raise goes automatically to the Town Clerk; the clerk has to go before the Town Council and ask for it. She stated that she believes Nancy deserves a little bit more than what she is getting. She stated that they have to be careful what they say. She stated that they can only do a one time a year a salary increase. She stated that so, if this survey is done in August, a salary change cannot be done then, and it will not be done until next year. ■ Mr. Hellen stated that the Town Clerk has gotten the COLA every year since he has been here in 2015. He stated that they can actually adjust the salary mid-year; it is just legislation that goes before the Town Council. He stated that for everyone on the municipal staff it has to be fair and equal. He stated that Nancy does an amazing job and she has made it a professional level. He stated that he thinks they have to wait for the numbers to come out in fairness and equity to all the staff as many other people are asking for the same thing. He stated that the Town Council has to go through a roll call vote regarding the Town's Clerk salary as it is an elected position. ■ Councilor Pellegri stated that she does not agree with everything that Mr. Hellen is saying and she will get backup information to show that. ■ Councilor Chandler discussed approving the COLA for the Town Clerk tomorrow night. He stated that what concerns him is that every person out there except one department head who just started is way above Nancy. He stated that her salary is so low he feels that it needs to be adjusted. He stated that he knows they will need to find some money and he does not want to wait until the summer for the salary survey. ■ Chair Mercer stated that they would have to find a place to take that money from, some other budget.

► Hold on Line Item 177: Planning and Growth Management. ■ Councilor Frongillo stated that he could not get the numbers to work for the increase. ■ Mr. Hellen stated that there is a large decrease in the Building Department's budget which is because all the permitting clerks were in Building Commissioner Gus Brown's budget and now, they have all been cross trained. Mr. Tyler Paslaski is now the Administrative Assistant in the Planning Department so that full-time job came out of the Building Department and went into the Planning Department. As well, a position came out of Mr. Brown's budget and went into the Board of Health. He stated that the new Conservation Agent is now a full-time position as opposed to a part-time position. ■ Councilor Jones noted that there are accounting changes such as this in this year's budget.

► Hold on Line Item 192: Public Property & Buildings. ■ Chair Mercer thanked Mr. Michael D'Angelo, Director of Public Facilities, and his staff for an incredible year and being an integral part of keeping the employees and the public safe. He asked Mr. D'Angelo what are the big projects he foresees working on over the next year. ■ Mr. D'Angelo noted that they are putting out to bid the Horace Mann drainage to stop the flooding in there. He stated that before the funding process is complete, they will have bids to restore the exterior of the Red Brick School such as removing the old paint and old boards on the eaves that have led paint and replacing the old doors and windows. They are working on the Town Hall building improvements such as carpeting and paint, new boilers, and new surveillance. He stated that what is coming up in the fall is getting the police station study done, and they still have Davis Thayer out there as a re-use thing. ■ Councilor Dellorco asked how he is handling the drastic price increases. ■ Mr. D'Angelo discussed the pricing and estimates from engineers such as for the Red Brick School. He stated that every design professional that works for us is required to submit an accurate budget for what they think the

project will cost. He stated that every project has a design contingency going from design to construction. ■Councilor Jones confirmed that school custodial staff falls under Mr. D'Angelo's purview. He stated that he has heard the custodial staff is having a difficult time at the high school in trying to keep up with the trash; he stated that on several occasions he has noticed there is a significant amount of litter and trash and other lingering things that propagate around the perimeter of the school. He asked if this was a staffing issue. ■Mr. D'Angelo stated that the students have had a tough past few years. Therefore, it has been much tougher inside and outside. They seem to be coming together better at the end of the year. He stated that there have been discussions between the DPW, the athletic director, and Mr. Ryan Jette from Recreation. He stated that litter has been a constant issue that they have been dealing with. ■Councilor Hamblen asked about the Horace Mann project and the flooding. ■Mr. D'Angelo stated that the plans were done last summer and went out to bid; it came back very high. It was going to run into school time. They believe they have solved the problem. It should be an early summer project. ■Councilor Chandler asked about the open 19-hour custodian positions. ■Mr. D'Angelo stated that they have hired three people recently. ■Chair Mercer asked if there was a need for more outside containers around the field. ■Mr. D'Angelo stated that he feels there are adequate containers; it just does not get put into the containers.

►Hold on Line Item 210: Police. ■Chair Mercer thanked Police Chief Thomas Lynch and his entire department for the job they do to keep the community safe. He stated that many in the community may not know what is accreditation; he asked for a summary. ■Deputy Police Chief James West reviewed the accreditation process. He stated that there are 332 standards that must be met to become fully accredited. He explained that the assessment team will be coming to Franklin to inspect all of the standards to make sure they are being met. He stated that they review every policy and procedure during the process to make sure they are up to industry standards/best practices and that they are being followed. He stated that 100 communities are fully accredited. He stated that the first step in the process is certification; Franklin was certified last May which was for 159 standards being met. ■Councilor Dellorco asked if they intend to put any kids through the academy this year. ■Chief Lynch stated that hiring in general is going to be a problem. The list is very short for people who take the test and pass. He stated that Franklin only has one over the minimum number of officers that is necessary. Therefore, if someone is sick or uses a vacation day, and then a second person is out, they are into an overtime situation. He reviewed the difference between hiring someone to go to the academy or hiring someone who is a transfer. A transfer is trained and the turnaround is faster. ■Councilor Chandler reviewed the cost of hiring Franklin kids who have to go the academy. He stated that it is a budget issue. ■Councilor Hamblen asked if there was more training that is necessary for the accreditation and if training raise the budget. ■Chief Lynch said absolutely. He said the budget was raised this year due to the turnover and training needed. ■Councilor Hamblen asked if there was any outreach to increase diversity in the force. ■Chief Lynch noted some schools that they reach out to that have criminal justice degrees; he explained the process of those programs. He stated that they are trying to diversify. ■Councilor Frongillo asked about two of the big increases which are conferences and education. ■Chief Lynch said conferences are what they pay tuition out of to send officers to specialized training school. He stated that education is the incentive that they pay to officers if they have a degree. ■Councilor Frongillo confirmed that this is a critical piece of attracting and retaining officers. He asked about coverage and overtime. He asked how much they look into opportunities to replace roles held by officers that could be done by someone else that costs less money. He asked about possibly using social workers. ■Chief Lynch said that they have 54 sworn officers and 2 civilians. He stated that details come out of a revolving account; the vendors actually pay the Town. He talked about the jail-diversion program and using social workers. He discussed a pilot program about traffic constables which is for directing traffic. He noted some changes due to police reform. ■Chair Mercer asked that in moving forward, what is the most substantial challenge facing the police today. ■Chief Lynch stated that hiring is tough. The younger generation is not interested in being police officers so selection will be limited. He stated that the police station is too small; there is not enough interior room and parking is difficult also. He stated that mental health related issues are a constant thing; it seems to be getting worse. He stated that opioids have not gone away and may be getting worse. He discussed that Narcan is

available for home use so many times the police do not even know about the overdose and therefore cannot help the person. ■Chair Mercer asked about the hiring process and if the right candidates are being identified. ■Chief Lynch stated that he has heard from his peers that the civil service departments are having a much worse time trying to fill positions.

► Hold on Line Item 220: Fire. ■Chair Mercer thanked the entire department for their work in getting the ISO #1 designation. He asked about the personnel status of the department for the FY23 budget. He asked what is the next investment that the department needs for fire services for the Town for the next five years. ■Fire Chief James McLaughlin stated that they have 55 of the 56 firefighters for full staff. They had an unexpected retirement and they are trying to fill the vacancy which should be filled by July. They have one civilian. He reviewed that staffing, equipment, and training are the three most important components. He stated that ambulance runs are going up; these runs can take up to an hour. At those times, the ladder truck is not staffed. It would require eight more firefighters to have the truck manned at all times and get a third ambulance manned and not rely on mutual aid. He discussed grants that they have applied for. He stated that the ladder truck is from 2008 and his goal is to find out what a refurbishment or new ladder truck would cost. He is going to get all the information and present it to the Town Administrator. He hopes to get a decision by the fall. ■Councilor Jones asked about equipment needed to extinguish electric vehicle fires and other types of fires. He noted that electric vehicle fires take 10 times more water to put out and sometimes such fires can go on for days as the battery keeps burning. ■Councilor Dellorco asked about what they would do if the ladder truck were getting refurbished. ■Chief McLaughlin said they would have to make arrangements for this to have a vehicle protecting the town. ■Councilor Hamblen congratulated the department on the ISO #1 rating. She asked how high the ladder truck reaches. She asked about eight personnel being added on in a perfect world. ■Chief McLaughlin said the current ladder truck is 100 ft. and it is adequate. However, the truck is getting old so they want to plan ahead. He discussed that to have the extra staff would be great. They have a third ambulance ready to go, they have enough space, and they would make it work. ■Councilor Chandler asked about the ambulance. ■Chief McLaughlin said that they have one ambulance in each station. ■Councilor Cormier-Leger asked about dispatch calls. ■Chief McLaughlin explained the joint community MECC dispatch center. ■Mr. Hellen reviewed how the MECC takes calls and the mutual aid agreement. ■Chair Mercer stated that it seems like we are continuing to get a lot of calls from the assisted living centers within town when individuals have fallen and their staff will not pick them up. So, we send an ambulance to that location to help pick an individual up. He stated that he asked Chief McLaughlin's predecessor to talk to these facilities and see if there is a way to privatize some of those calls to not tie up Franklin's ambulances due to a fall. He suggested getting all four of them in the same room and trying to work with them all together. ■Chief McLaughlin stated that they have a problem with one particular place. He has gone out there and had a conversation with them. He stated that we do monitor that. He stated that if it is a situation that does become burdensome, we have an ordinance that a fee can be enacted as a tool; he stated that this has not been done since he has been here. He stated that it would be a good idea to have a conversation with them all.

► Hold on Line Item 225: Regional Dispatch. ■Councilor Pellegrini stated that there is a good size increase and she thought that it was not going to be costing more money. She asked what the increase is for. ■Mr. Hellen stated that the increase is because if we did not have the development grant through the state, this line item would be \$1.3 million. People may remember that two years ago we were successful in getting a four-year grant. The full assessment for the Town of Franklin, which is about \$1.5 million for this fiscal year, is actually 50 percent that the Town does not have to pay. In FY22 that amount is lower because the grant paid for 75 percent of the annual assessment. This year it is 50 percent; in FY24 the state will pay 75 percent again for the final year of the grant. In FY25 the full assessment for the Town of Franklin will come back on the books at approximately \$1.5 million. It would probably be about 10 percent to 15 percent higher if we did not merge with Mendon and Millville. He stated that a stabilization account was

set up for the MECC which has about \$1 million in it currently which will help in FY25. He stated the cost for each community is based on population and call volume.

► Hold on Line Item 292: Animal Control. ■ Councilor Chandler stated that he was wondering as we have to buy them trucks and vehicles and stuff, now that the Police Department has two canine vehicles that we equip, and one happens to be for Ben, are they able to use one of those later on as a hand-me-down, and could they use that fully equipped car to pick up any dog; maybe it would save them some money on vehicles. ■ Mr. Hellen said that he will raise the question to Tracey Taddeo. He would say that buying them a new vehicle is an uplifting experience.

► Hold on Line Item 300: Franklin Public Schools. ■ Chair Mercer thanked the entire School Department for their work during the past three school years. He stated that he was happy to hear that the vote to declare Davis Thayer School as surplus is on the June 14, 2022, agenda. He stated that it is known that the school district has a significant declining enrollment. He asked for the current student enrollment and the projections for FY23. ■ Superintendent of Schools Sara Ahern stated that she was here with Ms. Miriam Goodman, School Business Administrator; Mr. David McNeill, Budget Subcommittee Chair; Ms. Denise Spencer, School Committee Chair, and some other School Committee members who were in the audience. Superintendent Ahern stated that this year they have 4,809 students. She discussed why the enrollment is declining; it has to do with birth rate. She stated that they are graduating 430 students next Friday, June 3, 2022. The incoming classes have been about 280 to 300 students in kindergarten. Decreased enrollment is starting to hit the middle schools and high schools. The high school enrollment is now about 1,650. She said next year's enrollment is looking like 4,650. She noted that she is expecting more students to join kindergarten between now and September. ■ Chair Mercer asked now that Davis Thayer School has been closed for one year, will the School Committee be engaging in a redistricting analysis to ensure the current capacity of the schools is maximized. ■ Superintendent Ahern discussed the space needs assessment and facilities needs. She said that a presentation to the full School Committee will be made regarding space utilization and conditions of the schools in an effort to prepare for a redistricting next year. ■ Chair Mercer asked what the status is of the revolving funds. ■ Ms. Goodman stated that they have about 25 or so revolving accounts that generate revenue for the district and some are used to offset particular expenses. They have about \$6.6 million in revolving funds at this time; they anticipate using \$5.6 million of those funds towards the FY23 budget. ■ Chair Mercer thanked Superintendent Ahern for her five years in Franklin. ■ Superintendent Ahern discussed the importance of staffing. She stated that the biggest challenge facing the school community is trends and themes across districts regarding increased level of diversity across the community and marshalling resources to meet those needs. She stated that the pandemic has created new pressure points as well. There are increased academic and social/emotional needs. She stated that there is anxiety and worry about having to charge for breakfast and lunch next year. ■ Councilor Cormier-Leger asked what was the additional state and federal money that they get to operate. ■ Superintendent Ahern stated that \$70 million is the operating total budget. ■ Ms. Goodman stated that on top of that they will be spending approximately \$5.5 million from the revolving funds and in terms of state and federal funds they are looking at \$1.5 million from carry over from this year and some federal grant money. ■ Councilor Cormier-Leger asked how much of the \$70 million is Town money. ■ Ms. Goodman stated that Chapter 70 money will cover about \$28.5 million; the Town will pick up the differential. The \$70 million is on top of the Chapter 70. ■ Superintendent Ahern discussed that Chapter 70 money stays relatively stable each year even though the enrollment is declining. ■ Ms. Goodman stated that the per pupil expense is \$14,698 as of 2020; she stated that we would anticipate that it would go up for 2021. She stated that Franklin falls in the 25th percentile. ■ Councilor Chandler thanked all the School Department. ■ Councilor Pellegri thanked them for bringing Davis Thayer up at the next meeting. She stated that they have had a decrease of over 1,000 students in the last six years and they have closed the Davis Thayer. She stated that they have cut down on office staff, nurse, teachers, and custodians, and some other things and yet their budget has gone up about \$3 million this year. She asked how does she explain this to people. ■ Superintendent Ahern stated that they keep close tabs on staffing and enrollment

reduction. She stated that they have to stay within School Committee guidelines for class-size. She said that there is not a lot of extra in administrative costs. She noted that Davis Thayer had a small budget of about \$1.2 million. She stated that costs are going up. ■Mr. Hellen stated that instead of a \$2.4 million increase this year, the schools would have required about \$3 million increase had they not closed Davis Thayer. He stated that the savings on custodians, water, and electricity are saved in Facilities under Mr. D'Angelo. ■Councilor Dellorco stated that everyone did a great job. He asked how the teacher turnover is compared to other towns. He stated that substance abuse is a problem. ■Superintendent Ahern stated that turnover is probably comparable to other towns. She noted that there are a lot of relocations of teachers. She stated that they have done some great hiring, but there are some vacancies which will be difficult to fill. She stated that based on a preliminary survey report of students, they learned that in MetroWest vaping, alcohol, and marijuana use is down. However, they want to look at how the question was asked. ■Councilor Jones noted that of the approximately \$70 million for the schools recommended by the Finance Committee, that makes up approximately 54.7 percent of the total General Fund of approximately \$128 million. Of that, 40.9 percent is state aid and the Town's expense is the remainder of approximately \$41 million out of tax revenue. One of the misconceptions is that the Town is paying 54 percent of the budget to the schools because of the amount of the state funding. He stated that teachers are underpaid. He stated that we are underfunded. He stated that we as a community need to come to a collective understanding that to support the level of education the students need, it is going to require additional funding. He asked if they find that people are interested in being teachers because of the challenges associated with being a teacher. ■Superintendent Ahern stated that she sees a lot of stress among the educators. However, there are great candidates out there and they are doing some great hiring. She discussed unfunded mandates and focusing on community specific needs. ■Councilor Hamblen stated that she appreciates all the hard work they did. She discussed that the budget was light on administration and they may need another to get the work done. She stated that she heard from the Finance Committee meeting that they were thinking of starting a dyslexia program. She asked where the money comes from. ■Superintendent Ahern discussed the process of adding a dyslexia program and support services for dyslexia over the next couple of years. ■Councilor Frongillo stated that he echoed what everyone has said. He noted how much they are underfunding the schools. He stated that they do a lot with a little. He stated that we as a Town Council if this is approved will be giving you everything you asked for this year. He asked what was not asked for or funded or could be if we had more funds. ■Superintendent Ahern said that there were some things in the discussions that did not make it into the budget. She stated world language and expanding world language programs could be included. She said she gets communication from families that they may send their children to the Charter School as that school has world language. She stated that they have talked about reading materials that children will see themselves represented in the books that they read. She stated that the K-8 libraries are areas that could use restoring of the library media specialists. She discussed an expanded school day. She stated that school lunches are important. She stated that teachers could use more support. She stated that there are needs in the central office team support such as an assistant business administrator and assistant technology director. ■Councilor Frongillo said these items all seem like basic items the students need. He stated that competitive salaries are needed to attract top talent. He asked if they are looking at salaries and the cost of vacancies. He stated that most teachers do not put on the morning announcements; maybe that is worth re-examining. ■Superintendent Ahern stated that they look at similarly sized communities and salary comps. She stated that they have lost some candidates due to the salary decrease. She stated that there will be some positions that are hard to fill even with a comparable salary. ■Councilor Sheridan thanked Superintendent Ahern for her service and wished her good luck. ■Mr. McNeill thanked the Town Council for looking at and supporting their budget. He stated that a lot of hard work was put into the budget. He stated that they have amazing extracurricular activities and special education programs in Franklin and students do not have to go out of district for these services.

► Hold on Line Item 422: DPW-Highway. ► Hold on Line Item 422: DPW-Park & Tree. ► Hold on Line Item 422: DPW-Snow & Ice. ► Hold on Line Item 422: DPW-Central Motors. ► Hold on Line Item 422:

DPW-Recycling. ► Hold on Line Item 422: DPW-Administration. ► Hold on Line Item 422: DPW-Storm Water. ► Hold on Line Item 422: DPW-Street Lighting. ■Chair Mercer stated that the DPW helps the community run strong all year long in maintaining streets, water and sewer systems, and many other tasks. He thanked the entire department. He asked what services are restored in this year's budget from FY22. He asked for project updates for the summer. ■Director of Public Works Brutus Cantoreggi stated that they lost two positions because they had to be cut because of the stormwater mandate. This year, his budget did go up and they got two positions back. They are looking forward to that. He stated that they have about finished up Arlington Street; it came in on budget. He discussed MacKintosh roadways and said all the infrastructure is in and they are going to repave it late June/early July; the job came in on budget. Country Club water main will be done this year and should be starting in July. He stated that the Grove Street signal has been bid out and is also starting in July. He talked about mill and overlay on King Street and sections of Union Street, and the King Street and Chestnut Street portion of Rt. 140. He stated that regarding the SNETT trail, they will be doing the grading and expanding the parking lot. He talked about Grove Street which will go out to bid shortly; it is about a two-year job. He introduced Mr. Carlos Rebelo, Highway Superintendent, and Mr. Derek Adams, Stormwater and Environmental Affairs Superintendent. He discussed some miscellaneous asphalt work that they will be doing. ■Councilor Frongillo commended them for the work on SNETT and the parking lot expansion. He discussed the cost for moving someone around town. He asked how often do we look at if we are appropriately prioritizing those movements around town such as infrastructure and maintenance including snow removal. ■Mr. Cantoreggi stated that they constantly review what they do. The Town made great improvements with sidewalks on Chestnut Street and Pleasant Street. He noted the complete streets program. He stated that most people still drive cars, and we have to react to that as an immediate priority. He stated that they are doing more work with cameras at signals instead of timed signals. ■Councilor Frongillo stated that if something was useful people would use it such as sidewalks. He thinks that Franklin for All will gently increase the density in downtown which will make more biking. He requested an update on compost. ■Mr. Adams spoke about maximizing the at-home compost bins. People can purchase a discount compost bin; this is the most affordable way to do it. He noted having a collection service at the Transfer Station. ■Councilor Cormier-Leger said that they do a tremendous job. He stated that he would like them to put together a comprehensive plan to address existing sidewalks. He stated that older sidewalks are aging. People would feel more comfortable if there were at least a plan. People should be able to walk around their neighborhoods without stepping onto the street. It is a safety issue. He asked if there was somewhere in the budget for existing sidewalks. ■Mr. Cantoreggi stated no. He stated that the priority right now is the roads. ■Mr. Rebelo stated that they try to do their best with the money they have. ■Councilor Hamblen asked about recycling of the pink bags and the changed process. ■Mr. Adams stated that they had to adjust that plan based on the fuel costs associated with collecting the pink bags. He stated that over time, the donations were not as much. He reviewed the most sustainable way to keep the program; people can call or go online to schedule a pickup and there is a drop off location at the DPW and Recycling Center. He stated that the pink bags do not have to be used anymore; any bag will do. ■Mr. Cantoreggi stated that the service does not cost the Town any money. ■Councilor Hamblen stated that people ask her about helping with the trails. ■Mr. Cantoreggi stated that usually people come to them and tell them that they want to help out. He stated that he is not in charge of trails. If a group wants to come together to do something, he will work with them and help out. ■Councilor Jones asked about litter and trash pick up around town. He asked about illegal dumping. He stated the DPW does great job. ■Mr. Cantoreggi stated that some of it is staffing and some of it is communication. He noted that in some towns it is take in/take out. He suggested that if some teams create lots of litter, then they should not get to use the field again because they are not taking care of it. It is a balance and it is education. He talked about illegal dumping and how they often track them down. ■Councilor Dellorco asked if Mr. Cantoreggi figured in for rising fuel costs. ■Mr. Cantoreggi discussed the expenses in his budget. He stated that they do a good job in forecasting. However, he has had a hard time figuring out the last six months. In this budget he had already increased the fuel budget by \$70,000 before the war with Ukraine. Since then, if things stay the same, they are another \$170,000 that is not in next year's budget; it is a difficult thing. He discussed the

cost of fuel. ■Superintendent Ahern added that they sent out a notification last week talking about the difficulty they were having with unsupervised kids on school grounds after hours. She was wondering if some of the litter they are experiencing is from the unsupervised kids. She stated that kids can learn and be expected to throw away their trash.

► Hold on Line Item 510: Board of Health. ■Chair Mercer asked about the staffing. ■Mr. Hellen stated that the main increase in administrative personnel is that Melissa's salary downstairs was moved from the Building Department's budget to the Health Department's budget. The second piece is for the state required part-time public health nurse. He stated that through a recent regional alliance with Wrentham and Norfolk, we are getting about \$900,000 over three years from a public health grant.

► Hold on Line Item 630: Recreation. ■Councilor Dellorco stated that he wanted the people to know about upcoming projects. ■Mr. Ryan Jette, Recreation Director, stated that although not yet voted through, with Community Preservation money they are looking to do the Nason Street lot to be completely renovated. He noted the Beaver Street expansion project completion with a state grant of \$200,00 that Mr. Hellen put in for. He stated that they will do the Fletcher Field playground over, and they are looking to do some work at the King Street Memorial Park in 2024. He noted that unsupervised children are contributing to about 90 percent of the litter. He stated that his staff is always sweeping trash at the fields. ■Chair Mercer asked about participation in programs and staffing. ■Mr. Jette stated that they are way up right now with about 5,800 kids a year. They are about \$60,000 in revenue for the past three months. He explained that they added one-half of a position into this budget. They have 58 active employees. He noted minimum wage is up. ■Councilor Jones noted that Recreation is self-funded. He stated that the Recreation Department is great. ■Mr. Hellen stated that Mr. Jette continually innovates based on customer wants. ■Councilor Sheridan asked about lifeguards. ■Mr. Jette stated that they have a swim-at-your-own-risk policy. He stated that lifeguards are difficult to find. ■Chair Mercer asked if a swim area is roped off. ■Mr. Jette stated that he can do that.

► Hold on Line Item 695: Cultural Council. ■Councilor Cormier-Leger stated that he is grateful that the \$15,000 is there which the Cultural Council uses for grants; however, he stated that he criticizes this as it does not show an increase and does not really show our commitment as a community to arts and culture as a cultural district and a place that just had a cultural festival. He stated that he thinks this is a misstep. He thinks they need to look at a way to help that committee of volunteers for the festival they are going to put on. ■Mr. Hellen stated that he agrees with Councilor Cormier-Leger. He stated that this exposes a gap that the community also has to help out with. He noted that the Committee preferred to do their fundraising, etc., rather than have a Town appropriation. He stated that the Town of Franklin is losing many economic opportunities in the cultural and arts arena. He stated that he thinks these groups need to start working together; they need to come up with a strategic plan. He stated that a deeper conversation needs to happen: what is the plan and where are we going to put those funds. ■Councilor Frongillo stated that the very little that we put into culture and arts comes back manyfold. He stated that it adds value to the Town. He stated that the only place he differs is that he would not put the onus on the volunteer arts advocates; he would put the onus on the Town. ■Councilor Chandler asked about state grants. ■Mr. Hellen stated that most of the funding for the SAFE Coalition comes through the state outside of the appropriation we made this year. He stated that funding non-profits is an extremely dangerous precedent. He stated that in terms of the cultural stuff, we get a matching appropriation from the state that is not in the Town budget for grants. He stated that he does not believe the SAFE Coalition or the Downtown Partnership get money from the Cultural Council. He noted that in November, after all the state aid comes through, the state budget is completed, and the new cheery sheets are in, they come back and have a meeting to close the loop on items. He recommended they approve the budget as is tomorrow night and let's watch where all of this goes in terms of revenue sources over the next months including state aid and certainly make an adjustment to line items in the fall before the tax rate is set.

■Chair Mercer declared the first public hearing closed. He stated that by law, they are required to have a second public hearing which will be held tomorrow evening. He asked the Town Council members to tell him after the meeting if there is a department that they would like to have come back tomorrow night. He thanked everyone for being here tonight. He stated that it was a very informative night.

ADJOURN: ►MOTION to Adjourn by Jones. SECOND by Dellorco. No Discussion. ►VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0. Meeting adjourned at 11:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Lizardi
Recording Secretary